



THIS WEEK IN IRAQ

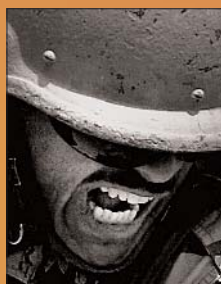


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U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jason T. Bailey

An Iraqi worker prepares ceiling tiles during an inspection of the new 8th Iraqi Army Division barracks by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on March 27.

Time to PRT in Iraq

Story by Sgt. Orlando Claffey
124th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Efforts to rebuild Iraq's capital city took a big step forward with the inauguration of the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team on March 26.

The Baghdad Province is the fourth to establish a PRT, which will bring several military and civilian reconstruction organizations together under the local Iraqi governments.

"The United States, with its Coalition and Iraqi partners, has worked hard to lay the foundation of a free and prosperous Iraq," said Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq. "Of all the PRTs, the Baghdad PRT may be the most critical one yet to the accomplishment our joint objective of a free and prosperous Iraq. [It] will

strengthen the ability of Iraqis to improve their local communities by rebuilding their civil society. But the core mission remains across the board in all PRTs, to strengthen local government."

This joint civilian-military initiative will assist Iraq's provincial governments in developing a transparent capability to govern and promote increased security and rule of law, along with political and economic development to meet the basic needs of the population.

"Not only is Baghdad the seat of the national government," said Khalilzad, "with seven million inhabitants - one-quarter of the entire Iraqi population - Baghdad Province is the most populous of

See **PRT**, Page 3

GENERAL CASEY'S CORNER**Rescues not coincidence**

In the midst of everything going on in Baghdad last week came the welcomed news that Christian Science Monitor

reporter Jill Carroll had been released. By the time this article is published, Carroll will be in Boston for a well-deserved repatriation with family and friends. It is unclear at this time why the group holding Carroll released her after more than

80 days in captivity. According to her kidnappers, it was because of the release earlier this year of some female detainees.

That is an unlikely answer. Every month the Coalition routinely releases suspects rounded up in operations around the country once their true identity and intentions are known. In my opinion, Carroll was most likely released because of increasing pressure being exerted by Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces on the terrorists and militias.

For example, Operation Scales of Justice began prior to the seating of the Council of Representatives on Feb. 16 and continues today; putting about 650 more U.S. troops in Baghdad to provide extra security during the formation of the Iraqi government.

In addition, eight more battalions of Coalition, Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police forces have provided an additional 100 combat

patrols throughout the city. With that increased force, each day we are able to conduct 350 patrols and operate more than 120 checkpoints around the city.

Recently, Operation Northern Lights focused on terrorist strongholds in west Baghdad adding unrelenting pressure on those that would

By Gen. George W. Casey
Multi-National Force - Iraq
Commanding General



murder, kidnap or terrorize. During Northern Lights, key insurgents were detained, weapons caches were captured and bomb-making materials were discovered.

Remember, Carroll's release came only a week after the successful rescue of three peace activists on March 23. Based on intelligence from a detainee

picked up from another raid, Coalition Forces acted within minutes after validating the information to launch the rescue mission. The hostages were rescued within hours and are now back with their families.

These recent rescues are not accidental, but the result of an orchestrated effort to bring security back to Baghdad. As security gets tighter, more kidnappings, murders and sectarian violence will be prevented. More and more terrorists are being detained, more information is gathered, leading to more terrorists captured. It is a beneficial cycle - and we are causing it.

No doubt, sectarian violence is still unacceptably high. Keep in mind that Saddam played on the ethnic divisions within Iraq for more than 30

"As security gets tighter, more kidnappings, murders and sectarian violence will be prevented."

years to keep himself in power. Sectarian violence is not going to end immediately, but it will end. Although the terrorists will continue to do everything they can to derail the democratic process, the new government will form and the Coalition and its Iraqi Security Force partner will help usher in a new era of democracy.

Photos around the Fertile Crescent

An A-10 Thunderbolt II from the 355th Fighter Squadron dives thousands of feet to perform a low-level, close air support mission after completing an aerial refuelling.



A Polish Soldier mans the gun on a Polish Army Mi-8 Hip helicopter carrying Coalition Forces to Camp Zulu on Thursday.



Soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division place barriers at a traffic control point in Baghdad on Wednesday.



An Iraqi Soldier from the 4th Iraqi Army Division dribbles past U.S. Soldiers with the Military Transition Team at FOB Scimitar on March 27. The soccer match was held to promote physical fitness.

THIS WEEK IN
IRAQ Online

www.mnf-iraq.com

Learning the art of the machine gun

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Russell Lee Klika
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BEIJI — Coalition Soldiers held a seven-day crash course for Iraqi Soldiers on the fundamentals of firing a PKC-47 machine gun on Forward Operating Base Summerall.

Weapons Squad Leaders of the 101st Airborne Division's 1/187th Infantry Regiment, known as the Leader Rakkasans, gave select Soldiers of the 4th Iraqi Infantry Division's 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, ammunition to zero their weapons and demonstrate their ability to fire from the sitting, kneeling and standing positions. Upon completion of the training, each Iraqi Soldier will be responsible for training other Iraqi Soldiers.

"Every Soldier exceeded our expectations by successfully zeroing their weapons," said Staff Sgt. Tracy Loveall of Crocker, Mo.

The Soldiers were taught to work as a team when operating the machine guns.

"Because of the language barrier and having only one interpreter, we found it to be quite challenging to coach the Soldiers. So we gave them a lot of trigger time to learn the techniques," said Loveall.



4th Iraqi Army Division Soldiers fire a machine gun during a training course at Forward Operating Base Summerall.

The extra trigger time paid off. Iraqi Army Sgt. Saheed from Kirkuk led the way by hitting 97 out of 117 targets.

One week and around 20,000 rounds later, the Soldiers were ready to engage the enemy said Staff Sgt. Matthew Evans of Ft. Collins, Co.

"We gave them a good building block,

and it is now up to them to teach their Soldiers what they have learned this week," said Evans. "I'm 100 percent confident that they will pass on their new skills. You have to remember, these Soldiers have no [enlistment] contract to be here. They are here to learn how to make Iraq a safe and peaceful country."

PRT

from page 1

the country's eighteen provinces as well."

PRTs have already been established in the Ninawa, Babil and Kirkuk provinces. Representatives from U.S. Department of State, United States Agency for International Development, Multi-National Force - Iraq, Department of Justice, Gulf Region Division of the Army Corps of Engineers, Multi-National Corps - Iraq and Coalition partners make up the team. While all have strong training, mentoring and developmental capability, they become even more effective by working together.

PRTs have been in place in Afghanistan since 2004, and now the successful model is being brought to Iraq.

"The improvement of the provincial governments' capacity to improve the lives of the Iraqi people is not only important to the United States and to the Iraqis, but to the world as well," said Khalizad. "A successful Iraq will reshape the future of the Middle East, and the future of the Middle East will reshape the future of the world.

"This is why the PRTs are not strictly an American venture," he said. "Soon, the United Kingdom will launch a PRT in Basrah, and the Italians will be standing one up in Dhi Qar province. Eventually, we hope to have a PRT fulfilling these missions in each of Iraq's 18 provinces."



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jason T. Bailey
Iraqi workers dismount from a scaffolding during construction of the new 8th Iraqi Army Division barracks on March 27.

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An Iraqi Soldier from the 1st Motorized Transportation Regiment waves to onlookers as his unit returns to Camp Taji from a supply mission on March 23. The mission was the unit's first operation executed independent of Coalition Forces.

Truckers cap first mission

Story and photo by Sgt. Joshua Salmons
4th Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs Office

CAMP TAJI — Members of the Military Transition Team assigned to work with the Iraqi 1st Motorized Truck Regiment waved and cheered as their protégés returned from their first independent supply-delivery mission on March 23.

"We're very proud of them," said Maj. Earl Mack, a team chief with the 4th Sustainment Brigade MiTT. "They trained hard. They were so excited. I don't even know if they slept last night."

"I am really proud about my unit's progress and, at the same time, I feel happy," said Col. Ea'ad, commander of the 1st Motor Reg. "My mission is so that my people and I can do this more in the future."

"There was very minimal U.S. input," said Capt. Anthony DeStefano, the MiTT liaison officer with the brigade's Special Troops Battalion. "They did the route selection and planning, determined their start-point time and coordinated for a link-up with the Iraqis on the other end."

The operation was the culmination of months of training from the 4th Sustainment Brigade's Taji-based battalions.

Using a combination of Mercedes cargo trucks, donated U.S. five-tons and Russian "Kraz" trucks, the regiment has a fully up-

armored fleet at its disposal. The Iraqi Soldiers have worked alongside American mechanics and welders on Camp Taji to learn how to support these vehicles.

"We continue to help teach them how to maintain their vehicles," Schiek said. "They've even taken two Mercedes five-ton trucks and turned them into maintenance contact trucks, complete with generators, air compressors and tools."

"They could probably machine parts in the middle of the highway," he added, laughing.

"For awhile we had a number of Iraqis come to the fabrication shop," Kness said of his unit's uparmoring mentoring role. "We taught them how to weld and fabricate, creating patterns to actually armor their own vehicles."

Teaching the Iraqis to do things themselves is central to the brigade.

"We have not gone down there to try to impose our will on them," Schiek said. "There's a lot of give and take. We'll ask them how they should handle something and they'll come up with a solution - often times it'll be a solution that we would have never considered that is better than what we would have come up with."

"With the two teams I work with, we have been working as one team," Ea'ad said. "We feel like we are brothers and forget that we are Iraqi or American. We both worry about each other."



Rebuilder of the Week

Turkish-born Airman calculates success

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Wojciechowski
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT — Women's history is a month that is marked by significant accomplishments of extraordinary females throughout time.

Women's contributions to the U.S. Armed Forces are among some of most significant events in history and female servicemembers are once again proving their greatness in the Global War on Terror.

One such contributor is Senior Airman Romina Sidi.

After high school, Turkish-born Sidi joined the U.S. Air Force in response to the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11 and gained her U.S. citizenship.

Sidi is now attached to the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division and has been in Iraq since October. Her Air Force job as an engineer incorporates surveying, design, drafting,

contract management and project quality control.

Sidi built a database to facilitate the tracking of construction and equipment projects in the 101st's area of operations.

"They [101st] came up with the tasking for the updates of course, but I came up with the database," said Sidi.

Tracking the equipment and construction projects for both the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police is her job.

"I get equipment and construction project updates daily from resource management," said Sidi.

The percent of the work that is done and the jobs funded are some of the facets she tracks. This is an important part of rebuilding the infrastructure of Iraq, said Sidi.

In the states, Sidi resides in Clearwater, Fla., and aspires to teach high school math.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Romina Sidi helped build a database used to track Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police construction projects.

Shadowing the insurgent hunters

Story and photo by Sgt. Zach Mott
4th Infantry Division Public Affairs

BALAD — Trailing behind like a protective shadow, members of Bulldog Battery's counter insurgency platoon followed an Iraqi Army patrol in an area south of Logistical Support Area Anaconda.

The Soldiers were there to ensure their IA counterparts properly conducted each phase of the operation. They offered constructive criticism when the group rallied at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan after the patrol.

"We go out there and see if they're doing the right stuff," said Sgt. Cesar Vazquez, a truck commander from the 4th Infantry Division's Battery B, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery. "Basically (we look for) the same things we would do."

As the patrol navigated through the dirt and sand roads, the Iraqi Army Soldiers stopped and talked to residents to see if there had been any terrorist activity in the area.

As the stream of vehicles moved further away from the nation's capital the land became more desert-like with each revolu-

tion of the tires. The lush green around one of the largest compounds in Iraq was a distant memory as those images were replaced with layer upon layer of brown. The few green spots along this route seemed out of place.

For the Iraqi Army Soldiers, this area is home. Because of the common bond of nationality and an ingrained knowledge of the area, the Soldiers have an advantage over the Coalition Forces.

"I have a good, familiar background with the people so he can ask about what is going on to find who is good and who is bad," said Sgt. Abdullah, the patrol commander from the 6th Iraqi Army Division's 2nd Company, 4th Battalion.

There are few other factors more important to Iraqi control over their country than an effective army. Because of this, Coalition Forces work hard to ensure the Iraqis are fully prepared to assume the task of protecting their country. This, after all, is the Coalition Forces' ticket home.

"(We want to) make sure they know how to do it and to let us know that they will be capable of replacing us," Vazquez said.

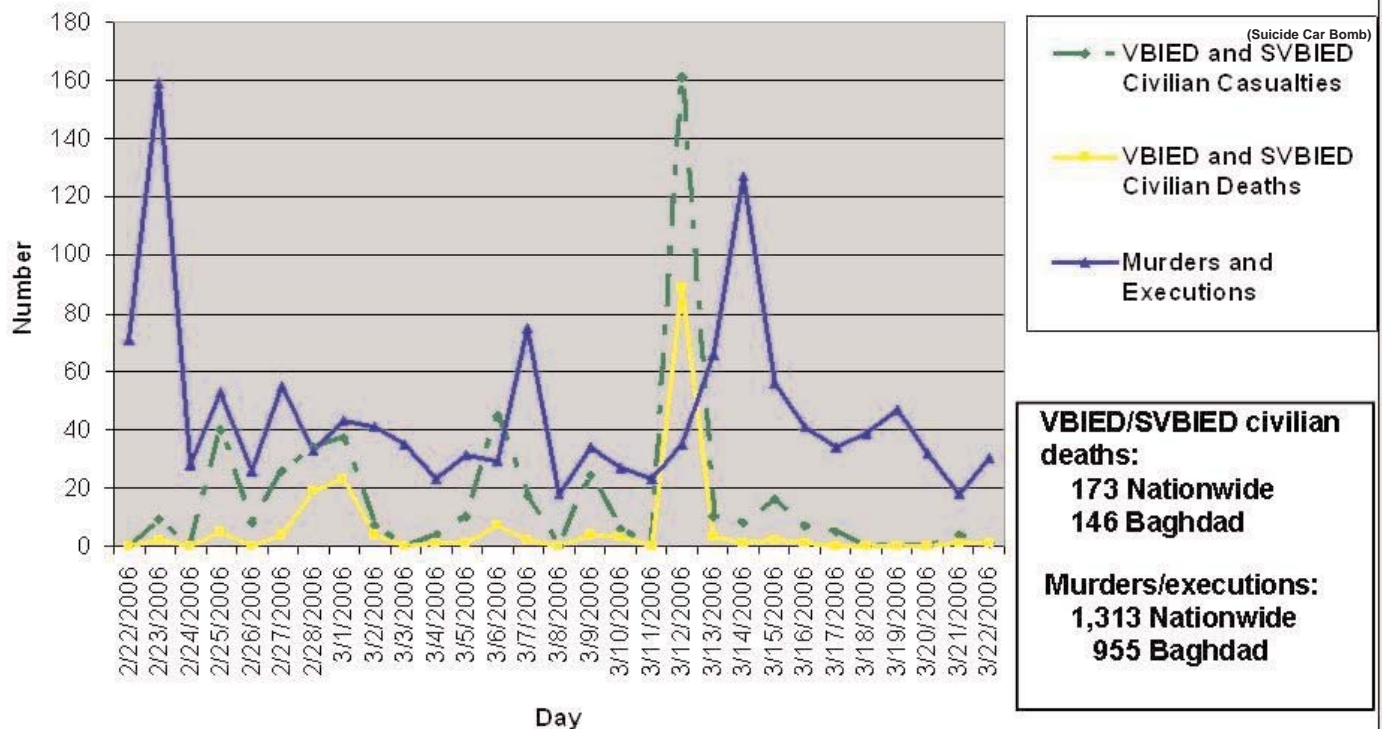


Iraqi and American Soldiers listen to a patrol briefing at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan.

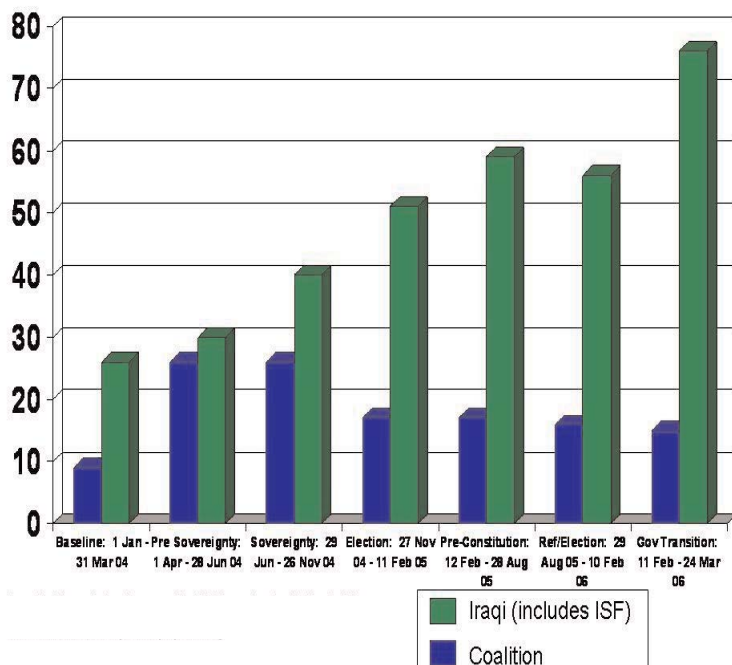
Murders and VBIED Attacks on Civilians

(Car Bomb)

22 Feb – 22 Mar 06



Average Daily Casualties



MNF-I Weekly Press Conference



Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch
MNF-I Spokesman

Cowardly Killers

"What we're seeing [the insurgents] now do is shift his target from the Coalition Forces to Iraqi civilians and Iraqi Security Forces. In this past week, if you look at casualties, 50 percent of the casualties were innocent Iraqi civilians - men, women and children simply trying to have a life, to go to work, go to school, go to the store; and they were the casualties, 50 percent. Thirty percent were members of the Iraqi Security Forces, and only 20 percent of the casualties last week were members of the Coalition Forces."

Cycles of Violence

"I talk about cycles of violence since the Samarra Golden Mosque bombing on the 22nd of February. In yellow you see VBIED [car bombs] and suicide VBIED civilian deaths. You see, in green, civilian casualties, and in blue you see murders and executions."

"Last January in Baghdad we averaged 11 murders or executions per day. We peaked at one point in time recently with an average of 36 per day. Based on detailed operations with Scales of Justice, we reduced that back to 25 murders and executions per day, still twice as much as the average before the Samarra mosque bombing."

"Now we believe, based on Operation Scales of Justice, the amount of violent activity is significantly reduced."



A local Iraqi man pours mortar at a construction site during a project to repair a section of the oil pipeline at the al Fatah Bridge on Tuesday.



Iraqi construction workers repair a section of an oil pipeline at the al Fatah Bridge.

The pipeline at al Fatah Bridge

U.S. Army photos by Spc. Charles W. Gill



A view of the collapsed al Fatah Bridge with a new bridge being built behind it. Insurgents destroyed the bridge, which encompassed an oil pipeline. The pipeline is being rerouted under the Tigris River.



U.S. Soldiers from the 50th Engineer Battalion come to shore on the east side of the Tigris River to ferry military vehicles across in support of bridge repair.

Working together to take down terror

Story by Sgt. Kristopher Joseph
Multinational Corps-Iraq Public Affairs Office

Night fighters

Iraqi Special Operations Forces conducted a twilight raid in the Adhamiyah neighborhood in northeast Baghdad to disrupt a terrorist cell responsible for attacks on Iraqi Security and Coalition forces and kidnapping Iraqi civilians.

As elements of the 1st Iraqi Special Operations Forces Brigade entered the compound, they came under fire. In the ensuing exchange of fire, Iraqi Special Operations Forces killed 16 insurgents. As they secured their objective, they detained 15 more individuals.

Additionally, one individual being held hostage by the insurgents was freed.

While searching the compound, Iraqi Special Operations Forces also discovered a cache with materials used to make improvised explosive devices and other weapons and ammunition. The materials were destroyed at the scene.

U.S. Special Operations Forces were on scene in an advisory capacity only. No Iraqi or U.S. forces were killed during this operation and only one was wounded.

This intelligence-focused, precision operation was conducted during twilight hours to ensure no civilians were in the area and to minimize the possibility of collateral damage.

Mysterious remains

Soldiers from the 8th Iraqi Army Division, received a tip from an Iraqi citizen that two men were trying to place an IED on the side of the road.

Soldiers responded to the scene and discovered the remains of one of the terrorists and an unexploded roadside bomb.

The Soldiers removed the remains of the would-be terrorist and the unexploded bomb.

Four men got out of the car and pulled two men from the truck cab and threw them into the trunk of the car.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Russell L. Klika

Soldiers from the 5th Iraqi Army Division and a Soldier from Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq conduct an operation Friday that resulted in the capture of suspected terrorists near Taji.

Take me to your leader

4th Infantry Division Soldiers detained a former high-ranking intelligence officer on Wednesday who is a known cell leader responsible for planning operations against Coalition Forces.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, and the 8th Iraqi Army Division detained the cell leader while conducting a search in southern Baghdad.

Know your neighbors

Three suspected terrorists were captured and three others killed during a Coalition Forces operation

in Amiriyah, Al Anbar Province on Saturday.

Reports identified the location of a potential safe haven for a wanted terrorist involved with helping foreign fight-

ers get into Iraq. Coalition Forces confirmed the presence of the suspected terrorists. After repeated requests for the surrender of the enemy, Coalition Forces engaged the enemy with a precision missile from a Coalition aircraft.

Two people were killed in the initial airstrike. Another male terrorist was shot and killed. Other occupants survived the strike and escaped into adjacent houses.

Coalition Forces convinced the occupants of the two adjacent houses to exit, resulting in the detention of three suspected terrorists.

Revolutionary revelation

A small cache was discovered by 4th Infantry Division Soldiers on the Jabouri Peninsula during Operation Cowpens on Friday.

The cache was discovered in a search aimed at locating weapons and capturing insurgents.

See OPERATIONS, next page



Iraqi Soldier Zatar Jeba and U.S. Army Pfc. Yasuo Albert provide security for fellow Soldiers preparing for counterinsurgency operations in Tarmiya on Wednesday.

U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Larson

Operations

The cache consisted of a machine gun, a rocket-propelled grenade, mortar rounds and a scoped sniper rifle.

Big Cache

Soldiers from the 6th Iraqi Army Division and 101st Airborne Division discovered a large weapons cache in the southwestern area of Baghdad Friday.

The cache of high-powered explosives (about 900 lbs) and other weapons was destroyed.

Gotcha

Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers assaulted an objective believed to be holding a terrorist cell leader in the northern Babil Province town of Haswah on March 26.

The Soldiers from the 8th Iraqi Army Division provided the main assault effort while Soldiers from the 4th U.S. Infantry Division held outer cordon security.

The suspected terrorist cell leader and six others were detained and no damage to personnel, equipment or buildings

occurred during the raid.

Asking for help

Acting on tips from concerned residents, Coalition Forces and Iraqi Soldiers discovered two weapons caches on March 25 east of al Imam.

Soldiers from the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, with their counterparts from 8th Iraqi Army Division's 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, found grenades and blasting caps after an Iraqi citizen gave them a tip.

A few hours later, another tip allowed the same Soldiers to discover about 300 grenades, ammunition and two 25-pound bags of artillery propellant.

Grab a six-pack

Six insurgents were detained in a raid conducted by 101st Airborne Division Soldiers near Samarra on March 27.

The raid also uncovered a weapons cache that included assault rifles, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, 21 bayonets and one mortar sight.

The detainees were taken into custody for further questioning.

Close call for Truckers

Coalition Forces, while conducting operations near Tarmiya, rescued two Iraqi men kidnapped during a "carjacking" on Saturday.

Coalition Forces witnessed a car stop a semi-truck along the highway. Four men got out of the car and pulled two men from the truck cab and threw them into the trunk of the car.

Two of the men drove off in the truck while the other two got back in the car and drove off with the hostages in the trunk. Coalition Forces interdicted the car and rescued the two hostages.

After the rescue, troops questioned the hostages about the incident, but neither of the men knew their assailants.

8th Iraqi Army Division provided the main assault effort.



Spc. Michael Sheridan from the 101st Airborne Division looks onto Route Redwing. He provides security for an observation point and troops on the ground.

Taking control of Route Redwing

Story and photos by Spc. James P. Hunter
Multi-National Corps – Iraq

BAGHDAD — To prevent improvised explosive devices from endangering the lives of Coalition Forces and Iraqis, elements of the 4th Infantry Division and 101st Airborne Division have been tasked to run security operations and route reconnaissance on Route Redwing in southern Baghdad.

Prior to the Soldiers taking over Redwing, insurgents used the route to bring supplies into Baghdad, said Spc. Derrick Marez, a gunner with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment.

Insurgents also used the route for a clear path to fire mortars at the International

Zone in Central Baghdad.

Along the road, many IED craters can be seen, some which took the lives of Soldiers only a few months earlier. On the west side of the road, there is a house where insurgents planned attacks, said Sgt. 1st Class Steven Crafton, a Company D platoon sergeant. Soldiers nabbed the insurgents.



Pvt. Joseph Boje a 101st Airborne Division gunner, helps secure Route Redwing from a humvee turret.

As the Coalition works to hinder IED placement, U.S. forces still need help from the Iraqi police forces, said 1st Lt. Christian Wollenburg, a Company D platoon leader. One of their main goals is to eventually hand over the route to the 4th Public Order Brigade, an elite Iraqi

police unit.

The Iraqis now provide security at the checkpoint, controlling traffic and ensuring no weapons or explosives are brought into the area, he added. They are also conducting joint patrols with the Soldiers.

Each patrol the 506th conducts, the light infantry tries to incorporate the Iraqis, said Wollenburg. Their presence lets the Iraqi people know their government is taking the needed steps to secure freedom for their country.

Wollenburg said the Iraqis are steadily improving. They are all wearing the same uniforms, carry their weapons correctly, and acting and moving as a unit.

The U.S. and Iraqi forces continuing efforts to eliminate insurgency on Redwing will ensure safety, said Wollenburg. Their efforts will give the 506th troops the opportunity to use their combat power in another area, and the Iraqi Police the opportunity to take control of the mission.

Rebuilding Iraq

Projects that are shaping a nation

Arbil Province

About 20 miles of feeder line will connect more than 45,000 residents in the Arbil Province with a new electrical substation.

Sulaymaniyah

Renovations to a maternity hospital in Sulaymaniyah are complete. Workers repaired the roof, elevators and installed a water treatment system.

Kirkuk

A renovated substation in Kirkuk has power flowing again to more than 10,000 residents.

Sulaymaniyah

Renovations to a police station in Sulaymaniyah give officers additional office space.

Beiji

A renovated police station in Beiji is set to become the Joint Command Center for the city.

Diyala Province

More than 115,000 residents in the Diyala Province have more reliable power with the completion of three substations.

Baghdad

Four checkpoints around Baghdad have been upgraded. Each now has guard towers, traffic barriers and vehicle search bays, enhancing security for residents and Iraqi Forces.





U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Katrina Beeler

An Iraqi Soldier stands watch at a new Iraqi guard station in Smarqdia during Arba'een. Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and U.S. Soldiers worked together to provide the pilgrims security on their trek to Karbala.



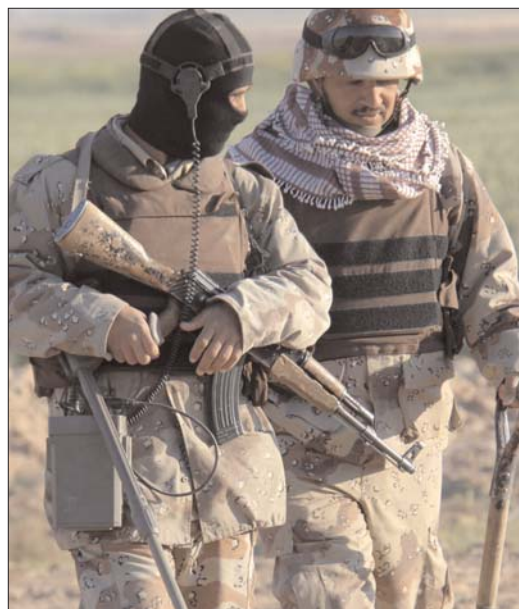
U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. John M. Foster

An Iraqi police officer fires a rifle during weapons training in Khidr Ilyas on Wednesday.

Out in front across the country

The force that is protecting millions of Iraqs comes in blue and tan

Photos can be found on www.mnf-iraq.com



U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 3rd Class Shawn Hussong
Iraq Soldiers from the 4th Division's 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, check for buried weapons during a patrol in the Salah Ad Din Province on Thursday.



U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Katrina Beeler

Iraqi police provide security for a crowd of religious pilgrims in Musayyib as the pilgrims make their long journey to Karbala.